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NEWS

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

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IT'S NEVER TOO LATE TO RESOLVE TO BE READY

For those who are challenged by making and keeping New Year's Resolutions, for those who might have already slipped in keeping those 2007 resolutions, the emergency management community has a recommendation for a resolution that is easy to keep, important to follow and beneficial to all.

By resolving to be ready for unexpected events and potential emergencies, everyone can prepare for and ensure their own comfort and safety in case of winter or coastal storms, power outages or transportation disruptions of any kind. Readiness starts with a household emergency plan and emergency supplies that will last for at least three days.

Even though Delaware was spared major hits from summer and fall tropical storms and the winter wrath that struck the mid-west in late 2006, months of winter that could bring snow and ice, or nor'easter winds and rain remain ahead. Delaware Emergency Management Agency officials encourage residents and businesses to update their emergency plans and supplies now, or initiate a plan if they don't have one.

Those who experienced the ice storm of 1994 or the President's Weekend snow storm of 2003 will remember that the coming winter months hold the possibility of icy roads, downed power lines and snow drifts. While the sun is out and temperatures are unseasonably warm, Delawareans need to take advantage of this weather break and prepare now for cold-weather emergencies and disasters.

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Being prepared with a plan and supplies is important throughout the year, but it's time to focus on some special needs that can be brought on by extreme cold temperatures, snow and ice storms and power outages.

Initial steps to resolving to be ready for weather emergencies include developing a household plan that includes a communication network, stocking an emergency supply kit and listening to local instructions. Pets should be included in all emergency plans.

- An emergency supply kit includes essential items to last at least three days. Water, food and battery-operated or non-electric radios and lights are key items. Medications and special needs diet supplies, a first aid kit, blankets, boots and tools are important. Don't forget food and water for your pets.
- As you develop a household emergency plan, discuss the hazards and threats for your area. List what your family would do during an actual emergency. As part of your plan, decide on a meeting place if family members cannot return home.
- For the communications part of your emergency preparations, designate an out-of-town relative or friend as a point-of-contact for all household members to communicate with if you are separated and unable to reach in-state family members.
- Plan for specific needs of your household, such as identifying an evacuation shelter for pets and determining how to transport medical equipment.
- Before, during and after a disaster, it is important to listen for the most local, up-to-date information from emergency officials. Local media will broadcast instructions from local, state and federal government partners, such as details about evacuation recommendations or orders, how to safely stay where you are and when the emergency has passed. If possible, monitor local weather information from the National Weather Service on a NOAA weather radio.

Special winter tips:

- Always plug space heaters directly into wall sockets, do not use extension cords. Place space heaters at least three feet from other objects. Do not leave them unattended.
- If using a generator during a power outage, place the generator outside the living space where adequate ventilation is available. Check with your electrician or local hardware store for instructions on use of the generator and precautions to take to protect electrical appliances.
- Install a smoke detector in every bedroom and one on every level of your home. Check the batteries monthly and replace them annually. Contact your local fire company for information on where to obtain smoke detectors and how to use them.
- Make sure that outdoor pets have adequate shelter, unfrozen water and food. Do not store anti-freeze where dogs can reach it. If pets go out into streets that have been treated with salt or other ice treatment agents, wash their paws when they come into the house or shelter.
- Be aware that driving is most dangerous when the temperature is at or under 32° F. If the road is wet, ice is likely, especially on bridges, ramps and overpasses. Find current road conditions by monitoring DelDOT radio, 1380 AM, or by logging on to www.deldot.gov.
- Even when roads have been treated with salt and/or sand, drivers need to reduce speed, give right-of-way to emergency and highway maintenance vehicles and leave a safe driving distance between themselves and all other vehicles.

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Free presentations on household emergency preparedness are available to any group, including civic, faith-based, educational and business organizations. These presentations are co-sponsored by the State Office of Volunteerism and DEMA. Senior Corps volunteer presenters who were trained by DEMA and SOV trainers outline establishing an emergency plan and demonstrate an emergency supply kit. Presentations can be scheduled for any time of day or evening. For information on presentations, call 302-856-5815 or 302-659-2210.

For more winter safety information, call state or local emergency management agencies:

DEMA, 302-659-3362, in-state toll free, 877-729-3362

City of Wilmington, 302-576-3914

New Castle County, 302-395-3600

Kent County, 302-735-3465

Sussex County, 302-855-7801

Other preparedness information is available on the DEMA website, www.state.de.us/dema and the American Red Cross website, www.redcross.org.

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